

**CONNECTING LITERACY INSTRUCTION AND
DISCIPLESHIP IN MOZAMBIQUE, AFRICA**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	ii
Introduction	1
A Brief History of Mozambique	5
Historical Cross-Cultural Discipleship and Literacy Instruction	7
Contemporary Cross-Cultural Discipleship and Literacy Instruction	11
Issues in Cross Cultural Literacy Instruction in Oral Societies	15
Evangelism versus Discipleship in Literacy Training	16
Encouraging Self-Feeding Discipleship	17
Formal Education and the “Wrong” Reasons to Read	18
Discipleship	20
Lifestyle in Community	20
Teaching and Doing	22
Proposal of a Literacy Instruction and Discipleship Ministry Strategy	24
Local Partnerships	25
Mother Tongue, Orality, Adult Challenges	29
Discipleship in the Literacy Program	33
Teaching Discipleship through General Thematic Units	34
Teaching Discipleship through Biblical Thematic Units	40
“Doing” Discipleship through Hospitality	45
Conclusion	49
References Cited	51

Introduction: Previous Views and Impetus for this Writing Project

I would like to begin by stating my impetus for this writing project by briefly sharing my previous views regarding literacy instruction in the context of mission, and the resulting problem that arose as I have begun to prepare for the ministry of cross-cultural discipleship. My previous view on literacy as it related to cross-cultural ministry was that I would need to set aside my cultural form of learning, which has been done primarily through literacy, when I work within a culture that primarily learns through orality. I had never considered any kind of literacy instruction in the context of a primarily oral culture because I did not want to “impose” my cultural style of learning on those whom Christ has called me to serve. Therefore, I had put literacy issues aside and did not consider that they would be a part of my future ministry. However, a problem began to arise as I became more aware of the issues involved in discipleship in a non-literate environment. These issues greatly effect the ministry which God is calling me to; the discipling of Mozambican women.¹ The main problem I became aware of was the challenges involved in discipling a person to become a self-sustaining Christian when he/she does not have access to, and/or understanding of the written Word of God.

In the winter quarter of 2006 I studied, under Dr. Douglas McConnell, in a course called *Thinking Missiologically*. During the time that I was in this class, three specific things happened in relation to this issue concerning cross-cultural discipleship in a non-literate environment, which sparked this research and writing project. Firstly, outside of class, I was reading a book

¹I would like to make it clear from the beginning that I have nothing against working with men, I love them just as much as I love women. But God has put women on my heart, specifically Mozambican women. I am stating this because I have been asked about why I desire to minister to women. The short answer is that I want to obey God, whomever He calls me to serve, be it men or women. At this time, He is putting women on my heart. I desire to encourage and build them up in their faith in Christ and show them the love that God has for them. I desire to disciple them and teach them what God has taught, and is teaching, me. I desire to be a living example of Christ's love to the people that He sends me to; whether women or men.

called *In the Day of Trouble* by a Chinese woman named Flora Chen. In the very beginning of the book she tells the story of a little old Chinese woman who appeared on her family's doorstep and shared the Gospel with Flora's father. Flora writes about this woman, "...like most women of her time, she had never been taught the intricate, innumerable Chinese characters. As her faith grew, however, she experienced an increasing hunger to read God's Word for herself."² The words of this old woman were, "I want to study and learn to read the Bible," and, "by the help of God, [she declared she would] learn how to read His precious Word."³ These words pierced my heart, and it occurred to me that maybe some people would *want* to learn how to read. This may seem a simple and obvious realization to some, but to me it was the beginning of a new understanding of how God puts desires on the hearts of not only of those He sends out, but of also of those to whom He sends them. That night I began to pray for God's direction regarding the issue of cross-cultural literacy instruction and discipleship, and I prayed that if there were Mozambican women who really wanted to learn how to read, that God would put a strong desire in their hearts.

The next morning as I continued to consider this new realization, I still questioned whether *reading* the Bible could truly be an authentic desire in a mostly non-literate culture. The story of the old Chinese woman's desire to read the Bible was still in the back of my mind as I sat in class that morning. That day Remi Lawanson, one of the teaching assistants, was to teach the class. He introduced himself and gave an overview of what we would be learning that day, but then he started to talk about how God speaks in every language, and how people should be able to learn about God in their first language. He went on to say, "This has nothing to do with the subject that we'll be looking at today, but I feel that God wants me to say something to

² Flora Chen, *In the Day of Trouble*, (Greenwood, IN: OMS International, 2005), 11.

³ *Ibid*, 12.

somebody this morning, I don't know who." He added, that there are billions of people that are still waiting for the Bible to be translated into their own language so that they can read in it their mother tongue.⁴ He repeated that he didn't know why he needed to say that, but that he felt God wanted him to, and then he went on to the regular lesson. My heart was pierced again because I knew that I was one of the people, if not the only one, that God was speaking to that morning. I believe that God was impressing the importance of literacy on my heart, and not just literacy, but the importance of reading His Word in the mother tongue. God used Remi's words to confirm the issue that had been raised in my mind just the night before when I read Flora Chen's words. I began to understand that this subject could be an important one for me as I sought God's direction in the area of discipling women in Mozambique, Africa.

The third and final link in this chain of events which makes up the impetus for my research occurred when we were assigned to write a research paper for *Thinking Missiologically* about a missiological problem that we are, or would, likely be facing as we minister in our respective fields. I decided to get a very practical missional problem from a field missionary serving in a rural area in Mozambique. I emailed a missionary friend of mine, Jenni Lawson, to ask her what problems she was facing as she sought to disciple women in an area north of the capitol of Maputo. This was one of her responses to my question regarding what missiological problem/s she was facing: "I thought about the difficulty of teaching someone to be a 'self-feeding' mature disciple of Christ in a non-literary culture." She goes on to say that this was a major problem for her because she would come with Bible study curricula and "ninguem podem ler" (no one could read). She said that even if they could read, it was not something that was valued very highly because, "people that can read don't have time, or make time to do it." She then finished by asking the pointed question which I believe is at the crux of my dilemma, when

⁴ Remi Lawanson (Class Lecture for *Thinking Missiologically*, February 3, 2006).

she says, “so you share the gospel easily enough through other means, but long term discipleship and growth kind of requires that you read the Bible, doesn’t it?”⁵

After the third link in this chain of events, I was beginning to understand that this would be a very real missiological problem that I would face as I return to Mozambique with the desire to disciple women there. In *Communities of Faith and Radical Discipleship*, Leon Spencer writes about radical discipleship and the African Church. He states a very important New Testament concept that directly applies to my concerns about cross-cultural discipleship and the needs of the culture in which God has called me to serve. Spencer says this concept is captured in, “...Christ’s question to Bartimaeus: ‘What is it that you want me to do for you?’ ... The odds are good that his sight was fairly high on Bartimaeus’s list of priorities, yet Christ permitted him to say. He was to define his own needs.”⁶ It is my desire to give opportunity to the Mozambicans whom God sends me to serve to define their own needs. And if their needs include a desire for literacy instruction, it is my desire to listen and act upon this need in obedience to God’s will.

When I did my practicum in Mozambique the following summer of 2006, I decided to inquire about this literacy issue whenever I had the opportunity. It turned out that I got that opportunity more than once, as I asked several women the following question, “If someone came and freely offered to teach you how to read in your mother-tongue, would you be interested in that?” The responses I received were so encouraging, “Yes!” “Yes!” and “Yes!” the women responded with excitement. I believe it would be wise to prepare now in order to learn more about how I can promote mother-tongue literacy instruction and disciple those whom Christ would have me to disciple. How am I to follow Christ’s command to go and make disciples in Mozambique, teaching them to observe all that Christ commands me?

⁵ Jenni Lawson (Email, February 23, 2006).

⁶ Leon Spencer, *Communities of Faith and Radical Discipleship* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University 1986), 110.

In this paper I will discuss the subject of cross-cultural discipleship in a non-literate environment, with an emphasis on the issue of literacy instruction. I propose that literacy instruction can serve as an open door to effective discipleship, in the context of cross-cultural ministry in a primarily non-literate environment, specifically in Mozambique, by briefly looking at the recent history of Mozambique, a historical example of the connection between literacy instruction and discipleship in mission, a contemporary look at cross-cultural discipleship and literacy instruction, relevant issues pertaining to literacy training in oral societies, the concept of discipleship, and finally a possible strategy for a cross-cultural discipleship ministry with an emphasis on literacy instruction in Mozambique.

A Brief Recent History of Mozambique

The country of Mozambique, which is situated on the south-east African coast, is slowly rising out of a tragic war-torn past. After around five hundred years of Portuguese colonial rule, Mozambique gained independence in nineteen seventy-five, and then a sixteen year civil war followed as the country sought to gain stability. The nation celebrated peace in nineteen ninety-two, and when I was serving in Mozambique as a teacher in two thousand and two, I remember the nation's joyful commemoration celebrating "Dez Anos de Paz" (Ten Years of Peace). There have now been fifteen years of peace, but negative effects from the past colonialism and civil war are still apparent in many areas of Mozambican life, one of which is education, and specifically literacy.

To my great surprise, while doing research on this subject, I discovered that twenty-five years before Mozambican independence, Frank C. Laubach, whom I will discuss in the next section of this paper, went to Mozambique to implement his literacy instruction program. In

nineteen-fifty Frank Laubach and his co-workers traveled to areas in the northern parts of Mozambique, about which he says, “In the northern half of Mozambique, where more than a million [people] live, not a single protestant foreign missionary was allowed to work. That area is probably as illiterate as any place in the world.”⁷ Although Laubach made this observation almost sixty years ago, the situation which he writes about seems similar to the current situation regarding missions and literacy in the north. The rural north is still far less frequented by missionaries, and the literacy rate is very low. Today the Mozambican government is seeking ways to provide some form of adult literacy instruction for the generations of Mozambicans who did not receive any form of education due to the prejudiced laws of the Portuguese during the colonization, and then due to the following violent conditions during the civil war.

It has proven difficult to find up-to-date statistics on literacy rates in Mozambique. Several of the most reliable websites had blank spaces for the country of Mozambique, while others had out-dated statistics. The most current UNESCO statistics on literacy rates in Mozambique show a literacy average based on following data taken in nineteen-ninety.⁸

Literacy rates in Mozambique		1990	2000-2004	2000-2004 Regional average
Adult (15+) %	Male and Female	49.9	...	62.5
	Male	60.0	...	70.9
	Female	40.3	...	54.8

However, the SIL website says that in Mozambique, “An estimated 60% of adults still cannot read and write, with the illiteracy rate higher among women.”⁹ If one were to take a round average of these two sets of data, and specifically in relation to adult women, the literacy rate

⁷ Frank Laubach, *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion: Adventuring in Literacy* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1958), 200.

⁸ UNESCO Statistics (http://www.uis.unesco.org/profiles/EN/EDU/countryProfile_en.aspx?code=5080)

⁹ SIL Statistics (<http://www.sil.org/literacy.htm>)

might be somewhere around 50%. This is only an estimate, and I would only refer to this percentage in order to give a general idea of what the current literacy levels might be. I would now like to look at a historical example of the possible connection between literacy instruction and Christian discipleship in this next section.

Historical Cross-Cultural Discipleship and Literacy Instruction

One of the most prominent examples of a cross-cultural missionary whose life and ministry shows the connection between Christian discipleship and literacy is Frank Charles Laubach. Laubach began his ministry in the Philippines working among the Moros people of Mindanao in nineteen twenty-nine. He saw the tragic effects of illiteracy upon the people, and says, “You think it is a pity they cannot read, but the real tragedy is that they have no voice in public affairs, they never vote, they are never represented in any conference, they are the silent victims, the forgotten [people], driven like animals, mutely submitting in every age before and since the pyramids were built.”¹⁰ He witnessed the lives of people who had been silenced, for all intensive purposes, leaving them voiceless amidst the societies in which they lived.

It was in the Philippines that Laubach first implemented his literacy instruction method known as, “Each One Teach One,” which was based on phonetic charts with picture-language connections. This method fostered individual attention as well as students becoming teachers of others, passing on the gift they had themselves received. Laubach notes four advantages to the “Each One Teach One” method, which I will paraphrase here: Firstly, the reading instruction becomes cemented in the mind of the student teacher the more he/she teaches it. Secondly, the student teacher is automatically given a new status in society because of that fact that he/she is now a ‘teacher’ and this is a great confidence builder. Thirdly, “making every student a teacher,

¹⁰ Frank Laubach, *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion: Adventuring in Literacy* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1958), 13.

the teaching is done at a small cost, and the increase in readers is very rapid.” Fourthly, the students come to realize that they are learning in order to help others. “The spirit of sharing is fostered.”¹¹ Laubach recounts that as he sat beside people to teach them, he saw, “a new light kindle in their eyes; love and hope began to dawn as they stepped out of the blindness and began to read.”¹² He witnessed these life-changing moments in the lives of those he taught, and he saw the numerous social benefits for these new readers.

The benefits of literacy seem to invade all areas of society as people experience a new-found sense of confidence, understanding, and enthusiasm. Laubach saw new readers setting out to promote education, healthcare, agriculture, and much more. They also began to write and create reading for others. Some general pamphlets that new readers wrote included, “Care of the Skin,” “Motherhood and Baby-care,” and, “The New Miracle Rice,” as well as Christian pamphlets such as, “God is Beyond us All,” “Why Does God permit Suffering?” and, “Where Christians and Muslims are Brothers.”¹³ These readers were beginning to contribute to and have an impact on the society around them. The self-confidence one gains from learning how to read can be beautifully illustrated in a student’s statement from one of Laubach’s experiences in Africa, “One young fellow was learning the syllables when suddenly he discovered that he could pronounce new words alone. With victory gleaming in his eyes, he shouted, “Give me a book! I can read!”¹⁴ What a joy it must have been to see so many people step out of the blindness of illiteracy into the light of literacy.

Laubach’s ministry shows numerous social benefits to reading, but coupled with these social benefits was his driving motivation; the service of and witness for Jesus Christ. From the

¹¹ Frank Laubach, *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion: Adventuring in Literacy* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1958), 62.

¹² *Ibid*, 14.

¹³ *Ibid*, 59.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 105.

beginning of his work in the Philippines he says, “If we can be of great service to the Moros during the next four or five years educationally, medically, and in other ways, then they will think of our Christianity in terms of loving service rather than in terms of doctrine.”¹⁵ Frank Laubach knew that his actions, specifically in literacy training, were a witness for Christ, and this is, in essence, the most basic form of discipleship. I will discuss this basic form of discipleship in more detail in a later section, but it is evident here in Laubach’s ministry in that he did not desire to merely *teach* about Christ’s love in his ministry, but He desired to *show* it, which he did through helping people to read. But what did Laubach say about literacy instruction and reading the Bible specifically?

As part of my research, I interviewed the head of the adult literacy service program of the Pasadena Public Library system, Rosalie Jaquez, which I will discuss in a later section. She did not know that I was a Christian, and when she told me about Frank Laubach, she said in a rather dramatic tone, “His whole reason for wanting to teach the Filipino Moros to read was so that they could read the Bible!” I could see that she was looking for some sort of reaction, whether positive or negative, I do not know. I did not react, but inside myself I said a resounding “amen” to Laubach’s motivation. I believe that there is a natural connection between spiritual and social service as one obeys Christ in his/her calling, and in Laubach’s case Christian discipling relationships could naturally grow out of literacy instruction. I share Laubach’s motivation of opening the door for people to be able to read God’s Word, and therefore grow in their understanding of and relationship with God, while at the same time giving them a voice in society, opportunities for jobs, and higher self-confidence, just to name a few of the benefits.

Laubach said that teaching non-literates, “is a means of extending the gospel, moreover, because every Christian needs to read his[her] Bible. Wherever a church contains many [non-

¹⁵ Ibid, 40.

literate], it feels weak and unhappy until it has taught them to read.”¹⁶ He was aware of the effects of illiteracy upon a church, and the need to read the Bible for Christian growth and maturity. Once people became literate and they had a desire to read, it was important to give them an opportunity to read God’s Word. Laubach stated that, “we must not only help them rise but we must also put reading in their hands, the right kind of reading in their hands; and that is a staggering task.”¹⁷ This is where the connection between Christian discipleship and literacy instruction is so evident. A Christian instructor cannot only be a witness to the student, he/she can also direct the student toward the Bible and other Christian literature. While Laubach was in India, he had a conversation with Mahatma Gandhi about the importance of literacy instruction. Gandhi brought up the fact that it was not worthwhile to teach Indians how to read because the material that was published was not fit to read. Laubach agreed, but then stated that, “the single greatest blessing that ever came to this world was the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. If Christ’s life had not been written, and if we had not been able to read the gospels, we would know very little about him.”¹⁸ Gandhi came to agree with Laubach about literacy instruction, and he became a strong advocate for literacy in India.

As I said in the previous section, Frank Laubach and some of his co-workers had traveled to the northern part of Mozambique in nineteen fifty. I was also shocked as I read Laubach’s book, *Toward World Literacy*, to find that Laubach teams had done work in seven of the languages spoken in Mozambique! The languages included are Chopi, Elombe, Gitonga, Shanga, Tsongo, Tswa, and Xironga.¹⁹ Laubach’s Portuguese motto in Mozambique was, “Cada um

¹⁶Ibid, 16.

¹⁷Ibid, 14.

¹⁸ Ibid, 22.

¹⁹ Frank Laubach, *Toward World Literacy* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1960), 323.

Ensina um, e Ganha um para Cristo” (Each one Teach one, and Win one for Christ).²⁰ Northern Mozambique is far less frequented by missionaries, as opposed to the south where the capitol city is. Laubach shares what one Mozambican man said following a literacy session, “We have had so much trouble that we had begun to think that God does not care. Thank you for the hope you have given us and for the chance we now have to learn to read.”²¹ What a powerful statement about the love of God and the service of His people! The “care” that this Mozambican man felt was that love of God that He desires to show through His servants, as He did through Laubach. There is no one that God has forgotten, or whom God does not care about, and God gives His servants the amazing privilege of showing this care and love. This connection between Christian discipleship and literacy instruction from a historical viewpoint is beautifully illustrated in Laubach’s ministry. In this next section I will look at a current example of this relationship between literacy and Christian discipleship.

Contemporary Cross-Cultural Discipleship and Literacy Instruction

I would now like to discuss the work of a current missionary who is involved in literacy instruction and discipleship. Through her doctoral dissertation and an email interview, I have looked at the work of Teresa Chai, a missionary to Bangladesh, and I would like to discuss some her relevant experiences and findings. In her dissertation, *A Scripture Based and Media Focused Literacy Program*, Teresa Chai says that she took a survey while in Bangladesh to find out the reasons why new readers were motivated to learn. At the very top of the list the reason was, “to read the Bible.”²² This fact is very encouraging because it shows how God touches hearts, just as He touched Flora Chen’s heart, giving people the desire to read *so that* they can read His Word.

²⁰ Frank Laubach, *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion: Adventuring in Literacy* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1958), 201.

²¹ *Ibid*, 201.

²² Teresa Chai, *A Scripture-Focused and Media-Based Adult Literacy program in Bangladesh with principles of adaptation to other contexts* (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission 2003), 22.

This is of primary importance in any environment where one is seeking to implement some form of literacy instruction; there needs to be a desire on behalf of the people. And even more encouraging is the open door for the connection between discipleship and literacy training. If people are desiring not only to read, but to read God's Word, then what a wonderful opportunity it is for the literacy instructors to begin discipling relationships which include Bible Studies for the new readers.

In my email interview, I asked Teresa Chai what kind of work she did in the way of connecting literacy instruction and discipleship, and she said that she used, "the literacy materials for the church leaders [to do] a Bible study."²³ This shows the strong relationship between learning to read and then studying the Bible. And it is important to note that the literacy materials for new readers, which are at a more basic reading level, make studying the often higher level Bible material, less intimidating and thus more open for understanding and discussion as new readers grow in their literacy skills. A new reader does not have to wait until he/she has achieved advanced reading levels in order to start studying the Bible.

Chai goes on to say that, "the leaders did peer mentoring," which seems to connect with Laubach's concept of "each one teach one," in that the church leaders are able to have one-on-one time as they study God's Word.²⁴ This format really fosters strong relationships and serves as a chance for the church leaders to teach and disciple one another. Chai says that this discipleship model helps the leaders "learn from each other [so that] they could best teach their own members in that same way."²⁵ The church leaders then become models for the church in reading and studying the Scripture together in pairs or small groups, and then continuing this process with the church members. Once the church members are able to read the Bible, and are

²³ Teresa Chai, Email Interview by author, 8 April, 2007.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

in discipling relationships, they can then continue this process as they reach out to the community. In her dissertation Teresa Chai says that it is,

“important to have a church-based [literacy] program for every people group with priority given to people groups having a 50 percent or higher rate of illiteracy...in this way, the local church in any given place can be providing a service for the community, as well as a powerful witness of the love, grace, and mercy of Christ.”²⁶

Through her ministry, Chai, is putting into practice, just as Laubach did, that vital connection between social service for the community and the witness for Jesus Christ.

Teresa Chai also echoes Laubach’s sentiment of passing on the “spirit of sharing” when she says, “I believe the "spirit" was caught as the people continued in the same measure they received.”²⁷ Chai’s ministry illustrates a beautiful model of discipleship using literacy instruction as a base. God’s love can be seen through this service, and the door is opened for His people to read His Word and be disciplined, as well as becoming disciplers. Chai also notes that much of the discipleship that she is a part of, and which takes place in the midst of a literacy instruction program is, “more informal...doing discipleship is a lifestyle.”²⁸ I will discuss the concept of discipleship in much more detail later in this paper, but I would like to say that I agree with Chai when she refers to discipleship as a “lifestyle.” All of the strategies and formal programs in the world cannot make up for the life witness of a disciple of Christ. Our very lives are our most powerful discipling tool, regardless of what specific ministry or service we are involved in, be it construction, nursing, teaching, counseling etc...

Finally, Chai addresses some specific issues in regards to women, literacy, and discipleship. I found Chai’s experiences in regards to women especially relevant to the situation

²⁶ Teresa Chai, A Scripture-Focused and Media-Based Adult Literacy program in Bangladesh with principles of adaptation to other contexts (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission 2003), 28.

²⁷ Ibid, 28.

²⁸ Teresa Chai, Email Interview by author, 8 April, 2007.

in Mozambique. She says that, “The illiteracy rate is higher among the female population in developing countries.”²⁹ This is certainly true in Mozambique, and this is mainly due to the responsibilities that women typically have. Women tend to have children at a young age, and they do not usually have the help of the father in supporting and caring for their children. Many times there is a kind of female generational support where the grandmother and mother live together, one working in the fields for the money/food while the other cooks and cares for the children.³⁰ Of her experiences in Bangladesh, Chai says that, “In most homes with low incomes, women play reproductive and economic roles leaving any educational activities to a secondary place due to lack of time.”³¹ These reproductive and economic roles understandably overshadow all other activities, including learning to read. Thus, anyone desiring to provide literacy training must be very flexible, seeking to provide help during the most available times according to the rigorous daily schedules of these women.

In her dissertation, Teresa Chai quotes the Seventh Day Adventists Church as saying that, “illiteracy is powerfully linked to low social status, poverty, and poor health that are magnified for women, even women in the Church.”³² Without educational help given in the spirit of God’s love, these women can be caught in a cycle of poverty, without any way of rising up out of it. Literacy is not just the ability to ‘read a book,’ but literacy can affect many areas of life and community, and Christian service and witness can be manifested through the door of literacy instruction. The Seventh Day Adventist Church goes on to say, “Further, women who cannot read are blocked from reading the word of God. This barrier cripples them in their spiritual

²⁹ Teresa Chai, A Scripture-Focused and Media-Based Adult Literacy program in Bangladesh with principles of adaptation to other contexts (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission 2003), 18.

³⁰ I do want to make it clear that this is not *always* the case. There are some men who do support their families, but this would not be the norm.

³¹ Teresa Chai, A Scripture-Focused and Media-Based Adult Literacy program in Bangladesh with principles of adaptation to other contexts (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission 2003), 19.

³² Ibid, 28.

growth and in the spiritual training of their children.”³³ Here, again, is the connection between reading and spiritual growth. And we can see that this connection for the women in these particular circumstances not only effects their own spiritual growth, but that of their children as well. Since they are the primary caretakers, they are the primary models. How does a primary care-taking woman spiritually raise up and train her children if she is not disciplined and trained herself? Like the ripple effect, each new generation of children is strongly effected by the mothers; mothers who suffer greatly at the hand s of illiteracy.

Teresa Chai says, “As for the church, it is among those who cannot read and write where there is a need for evangelism and discipleship ... once again, attention should be given to women who are often the ones who would teach their children about spiritual matters.”³⁴ Chai illustrates the great importance for the need of Christian discipleship through the door of literacy training. The church is hurting and weak when it cannot read, just as Laubach said in the past, and Chai sees this today among the non-literate churches. The ministries of both Frank Laubach and Teresa Chai illustrate the vital connection between literacy training and discipleship toward spiritual maturity. We have looked at a historical and a contemporary example of cross-cultural ministries connecting the concepts of literacy instruction and Christian discipleship, and now I would like to examine several important issues pertaining to literacy training in oral societies.

Issues in Cross-Cultural Literacy Instruction in Oral Societies

Using Harry Box’s dissertation, *Communicating Christianity to oral, event-oriented people*, I will discuss the difference between literacy in terms of evangelism and discipleship, the need for self-feeding discipleship, a typically Western education, and the “wrong” reasons to read. Against the backdrop of a Western literacy driven form of cross-cultural evangelism and

³³ Ibid, 28.

³⁴ Ibid, 29.

discipleship, Harry Box argues against the method of literacy instruction in primarily oral societies. He argues in favor of oral forms of evangelism and discipleship, with which I do agree. But for the sake of argument, he brings up some problematic issues dealing with literacy instruction in an oral environment, which I would like to address in this section.

Evangelism versus Discipleship in Literacy Training

First, Box speaks about the problem with cross-cultural literacy training in oral societies when he says that, "...it has become an accepted strategy for many Christian cross-cultural communicators to use the western education system of literacy and formal training, along with the provision of the Scriptures in printed form, as the best way to bring the Gospel to oral communicators."³⁵ I agree with Box that this is a problematic strategy in an oral society, however, his point seems to be focused more on the initial "bringing of the Gospel," in other words, evangelism. But Box also goes on to say that it is best to train leaders through oral means. The focus that I am concerned with is less on the effects of literacy on doing evangelism, and more on the effects of literacy in relation to discipleship. What is the difference? In short, I do not think literacy is a necessity in doing effective evangelism, but I do believe it is necessary for an effective discipleship ministry. The Gospel can be shared through many other means, such as storytelling, drama, songs, proverbs etc... And I would go so far as to say that a literate person who is studying the Bible can also use these means to disciple non-literate people. But would that be the most *effective* discipleship? The literate person would read the Bible and share the truths orally, but no one else would be able to read the Bible, individually or as a community, in order to grow themselves, or to disciple others. If the literate Bible reading discipler goes away,

³⁵ Harry Box, *Communicating Christianity to Oral, Event-Oriented People* (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary 1992), 6.

what happens to those who were being disciplined? This is a problem because the Bible material and teaching seems to *depend* on the literate person.

I need to be clear in stating that I am not at all opposed to using oral methods in my discipleship ministry, and I will discuss some of these in my strategy section. But I believe it is best to combine both oral methods along with literacy training so that one is not only sharing the Gospel and discipling people, but so that one is helping them *to teach themselves*. I would not want to create a dependency upon a few who are literate; rather, I would like to encourage literacy in the church and community as a whole.

Encouraging Self-Feeding Discipleship

Second, as Box talks about the oral techniques that cross-cultural workers can utilize to share the gospel and disciple people, one cannot help but notice that all the techniques are based on the missionaries being able to *read* the Bible. For instance, the missionaries might be reading the Bible onto audio cassettes, acting out a Biblical parable, or putting music to a psalm. These things are all good, but the people who *generate* all of this material are people who can *read* the Bible. Always hearing the teaching from the readers and never learning how to read seems to keep the disciples in a kind of *receiving position*. I deeply desire to see people move from a receiving position to a self- sustaining, and then giving position. This seems to be the natural flow of the mission that Christ calls us to, and this is where service and dignity meet. Infants need to be fed by parents, then they grow into children and they are able to feed themselves, and finally they grow into adults where they continue to feed themselves, but then they also feed their infants. By denying, or not addressing, the possibility of literacy training, we are stunting the spiritual growth process. If missionaries can serve through literacy training, they would be

imparting dignity rather than dependency, and they would be enhancing the spiritual maturity of their disciples.

Formal Education and the “Wrong” Reasons to Read

Third, Box says that Western missionaries have typically emphasized making Christians literate, “so that they could use the western formal education system to become spiritually mature.”³⁶ My argument is not in favor of teaching literacy so that people can use a “western formal education system” in order to become spiritually mature. If I look back at the example of Laubach which I have used, I would hardly call his methods highly formal or Western. In contrast, they meet the people where they are, teach them in their mother-tongue, and utilize the connection between sounds and pictures. There is no jump to a grand formal education, in fact he even uses the “each one teach one” method, rather than large lecture hall or classroom settings because he feels it is necessary to show personal care and to engender this care in the learners. This type of literacy training is far from an entry into highly formal Western educational methods or programs.

Box also brings up some problems in how non-literate people may view literacy, including the false concepts that literacy *means* Christianity, that *all* books are sacred, and that literacy *means* wealth.³⁷ No doubt, these are issues that literacy instructors would need to address and seek to clarify for the students, but they are not reasons which should prevent literacy instruction. The instructor needs to do his/her best possible job of explaining the truth about these issues, but even then the instructor cannot control what the students will believe. Some students still might even hold one or more of these beliefs to be correct, and truly that would be

³⁶ Ibid, 211.

³⁷ Ibid, 242.

sad, but should that keep one from providing training for many people who would not believe in these false concepts?

In relation to the pressures that oral communicators feel to become literate, Box says that many people want to read for the “wrong” reasons. For instance they might be motivated by greed to get rich, or by pride to gain status, or perhaps they want to read ‘less than honorable’ reading material. My response to this is that it is up to the learner to use their literacy skills for what they want. Of course I would want them to use their literacy skills for honorable purposes, or at least not dishonorable purposes, but I do not believe it is my part to seek to control that. The instructor is there to help people learn, and to be a witness to Christ in that context. There will always be people who want to use a skill for the “wrong” purposes. God allows an artist to paint what he/she wants. God does not only give the artistic gift to only those who will use it for noble purposes. There is no stopping those who will use literacy, or any other skill, for their own ‘deceitful’ or ‘self-serving’ purposes, but that should not stop one from offering the help.

It must be said, again, that Harry Box is arguing against the backdrop of a very non-oral and Western literacy based form of cross-cultural evangelism and discipleship. In that context, I do value the points that he makes. And Box does, “concede that literacy can bring many benefits to those [oral] societies,” as he lists economic value, political value, social value, educational value, and spiritual value.³⁸ He also says that once a person becomes a Christian, “there is a much greater motivation for them to want to know God’s Word, and this can be a key for developing a literacy program among them.”³⁹ I wholeheartedly agree with Box here, and I hope to minister in the way of discipling new Christians through, and alongside, a literacy program. If there is a spiritual hunger to know God’s Word amongst people of a primarily oral society, it is

³⁸ Ibid, 250-253.

³⁹ Ibid, 252-253.

my strong desire to minister by connecting the social service of literacy training and the spiritual service of discipleship. In this next section I will define and examine the concept of discipleship.

Discipleship

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus Christ commissions His disciples with the statement, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”⁴⁰ How does one go about ‘making a disciple’? And what is a disciple? In *Evangelism, Discipleship and Pastoral Care*, Daisy Nwachuku succinctly defines a disciple as, “a follower of the doctrines of a teacher or school of thought.”⁴¹ In Christ’s case, His disciples would follow the doctrines and way of life taught by Jesus. I would like to look at what a disciple of Christ looks like and how one can seek to ‘makes disciples.’ In order to examine the subject of discipleship I will discuss the concepts of lifestyle in community, teaching, and doing.

Lifestyle in Community

In my earlier section regarding the ministry of Teresa Chai, I mentioned the concept of discipleship as a “lifestyle.” This means that the actual *life* of a disciple of Christ is a way of ‘making disciples,’ which I believe must be the basis for all forms of discipleship. And the key to this discipleship is that the lifestyle of the disciple of Christ is lived out *amongst others*. It is not a solitary life of holiness, but rather a life which seeks to be holy amidst and among community. It is in the context of community that the life of a disciple becomes relevant and powerful. In the life model of Jesus Christ we can see that God chose to fully enter into the human lifestyle; “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of a Father’s

⁴⁰ Holy Bible NRSV Matthew 28:19-20a

⁴¹ Daisy Nwachuku, *Evangelism Discipleship & Pastoral Care* (Nigeria:Institute for Mission Development 2003),50.

only son, full of grace and truth.”⁴² Jesus modeled lifestyle discipling in that He did not live separate from people whilst *preaching* about how to live a life pleasing to God, but rather He actually *lived* a life pleasing to God *in community*. By entering into community and living lives full of grace and truth surrendered to God’s will, we can *be* and teach a life surrendered to God. It is this model that Jesus’ disciples are to follow, and by following it they are also able to ‘make disciples’ of others. In *Taking Discipleship Seriously*, Tom Sine says about Jesus’ model,

“He formed a community of brothers and sisters who shared common life together and learned together. In the context of this organic community He operated His informal school of discipleship. He used everything as grist for curriculum – from personal failure and relational conflict to small children and the rural beauty of the Judea and Samaria.”⁴³

Jesus lived through the struggles of those in the community, and he felt the pain and the joy of human life. Yet, in the midst of human reality He lived a holy life, and because of this He was/is credible and relevant. Jesus not only used the examples of everyday life as lessons for His disciples, but His very life was a lesson. Sine says that Jesus, “...became the living curriculum in His discipleship school.”⁴⁴ Jesus showed forgiveness as with the adulterous woman, zeal for God as He cleared the temple, the importance of time spent with God as He frequently rose early to pray and as He prayed into the night, faith in God as He calmed the seas and walked on water, living a simple lifestyle that was free from selfish and materialistic gain, servant-hood as He fed people and washed His disciples’ feet, organization as he had His disciples separate the people into groups to be fed, and obedience to God as He obeyed the will of the Father in dying on the cross. Just by witnessing Jesus living out His life, and not even hearing His teachings, a person could learn that the holy life God desires is pure, loving, relational, merciful, faithful, truthful, and forgiving, and much more. In *Learning to Walk with God*, Charlie Riggs says, “Jesus taught

⁴² Holy Bible NRSV John 1:14

⁴³ Tom Sine, *Taking Discipleship Seriously* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 77.

by example, a method He impressed upon His disciples.”⁴⁵ It is this lifestyle amongst the struggles, pains, and difficulties of life that will actually be a “lifestyle” way of discipling others.

Sine says, “...those of us who would be disciple makers must realize that in spite of our brokenness and failure, we are to pray that, through the power of the Spirit, something of Christ’s grace will show through in our lives too.”⁴⁶ We, as disciples, are not perfect, but God desires to use our lives to show the love of Christ to those in our community. And it is through the Spirit of God that this discipleship lifestyle is possible and effective; we cannot do it on our own. It entails both privilege and pain. It is a privilege in the sense that God desires to use an ordinary life to show His glory and bring others closer to Himself, and it is painful in that it entails suffering because of the reality of fully entering into real community and striving to live a holy life in it. What teaching is more powerful than an actual holy life being lived out? Discipleship entails teaching as well, but as Sine cogently reminds us, “What we teach can never be separated from who we are and how we live.”⁴⁷ Therefore, discipleship as a holy lifestyle in community is the necessary basis and starting point for all forms of discipleship. In my strategy section, I will look at this lifestyle form of discipleship in the African context and in relation to literacy instruction. Next, I would like to discuss discipleship through teaching and doing.

Teaching and Doing

Discipleship must originate from a holy life lived out in community, but discipling also involves active teaching and doing. What does a disciple teach, and from where does the teaching come? The Word of God is necessary for both the discipler to teach and for the disciple to learn. In a recent article about the importance of Bible Study, Billy Graham writes,

⁴⁵ Charlie Riggs, *Learning to Walk with God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Worldwide Publications, 1988), 187.

⁴⁶ Tom Sine, *Taking Discipleship Seriously* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 77.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 77.

“If I suggested you stop eating for a few months, you’d ignore me – and rightly so. We need food in order to survive, and without food we’ll grow weak and eventually die. Yet many Christians are spiritually starved and weak because they ignore the spiritual “food” God has provided in the Bible. The Bible is not an option; it is a necessity. You cannot grow spiritually strong without it.”⁴⁸

The Word of God is the spiritual food that a disciple of Christ needs in order to be a disciple himself/herself, as well as to teach other disciples. As I mentioned in my earlier section in regards to Bible reading and fostering dignity rather than dependency, infants in Christ need to be fed by parents in Christ, then they grow into children in Christ and they are able to feed themselves. Finally they grow into adults in Christ as they continue to feed themselves, and then they are also able to feed other infants in Christ. The relationship here between discipleship and the Word of God as spiritual food is shown so clearly in this spiritual growth process. The discipler should be able to teach the disciple what the Bible teaches, and the disciple should be able to read and study God’s Word for himself/herself as he/she continues to grow in faith and understanding. Then the disciplined can become a discipler who teaches others.

Finally, discipleship is not only a lifestyle in community, and teaching from the Word of God, but it is putting into practice what is seen and taught. The book of James teaches that we should be, “doers of the word, and not merely hearers...[we should] look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget, but doers who act...”⁴⁹ Observing the holy lifestyle in community, and listening to and studying the teachings of God’s Word are part of discipleship, but if no action is taken, then it is like a lion without teeth. Effective discipleship requires action on the part of the disciple. In the context of discipleship, there are many ways to encourage people to take action based on God’s Word.

⁴⁸ Billy Graham, “Reading the Bible-An Impossible Task?” Decision, July-August 2006, 16.

⁴⁹ Holy Bible NRSV James 1:22,25

For instance, in *Radical Discipleship*, Christopher Sugden notes, “care of the underprivileged” as a part of discipleship training.⁵⁰ One way that a discipler could put teaching into practice would be to join together in pairs or small groups to visit those who are sick or injured in the church and in the community as a whole. The disciples could pray and share with them, and give the chance for newer disciples to take part in these actions. Or a discipleship pair or small group could get together to make a meal for someone who needs it. These would be very practical ways to “do” discipleship in the community. A discipler could also take the opportunity to encourage putting God’s Word into practice by “doing” what is taught from a sermon. For instance, if a sermon is given on the concept of “giving,” the discipler and disciples could get together to give as group for a certain person or purpose in the community. The Bible teaches about these concepts; visiting the sick, caring for the poor, and the giving of wealth, so this would be a good way to act on these teachings as a part of discipleship. The discipler is always an example and model, as well as a teacher, and so it is important to put these things into action *together*, as discipler and disciples. The discipler as teacher does not simply tell the learners to do this or that, but the discipler should also be doing these things with them. I would like to note that all of these discipleship concepts are in the context of community, which I will discuss in more detail in my strategy section. I would now like to embark upon the second half of this paper, in which I will propose a cross-cultural literacy instruction and discipleship ministry strategy to use in the context of Mozambique, Africa.

Proposal of a Literacy Instruction and Discipleship Ministry Strategy

As I stated in my introduction, my primary motivating interest in exploring the concept of a literacy program is the desire to make mature self-feeding disciples who, among other things,

⁵⁰ Christopher Sugden, *Radical Discipleship* (London, UK: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), 128.

are able to read and grow from the Word of God. Therefore, it is my intention to connect discipleship and literacy training in ministry, and I believe that starting a literacy instruction program would be an opportunity to open a door for effective discipleship. It would be a wonderful opportunity to disciple people by naturally being in their midst, serving them both socially and spiritually. People would be able to see how a disciple of Christ learns, observes, listens, loves, serves, teaches, lives, forgives, struggles etc..., and the literacy instruction program would serve as both a social service, and a forum for discipleship to take place. Making disciples through the use of a literacy program would cover the three forms of discipleship that I have just discussed in my previous section; living a holy “lifestyle” in community, teaching from the Word of God, and putting God’s Word into action. In this half of the paper, I will discuss how to get a literacy program started through local partnerships, the issues of mother tongue literacy, orality in literacy, and some adult challenges in literacy, as well as discipleship teaching through thematic units and discipleship actions through hospitality, in the context of working with women in Mozambique, Africa.

Local Partnerships

In seeking to begin a literacy training program, as with any ministry or program, the first step must always be relationship building, which leads toward local partnerships. I delved into the subject of relationship building during my practicum in Mozambique in two-thousand six, and I will not go into detail about this issue here. But I would just say that relationship building, which could take place through the initial learning of the language, living in community, and learning about the Mozambican way of life, would be a must before initiating a literacy program.

While I was in Mozambique in the summer of two-thousand six, in the midst of language learning and relationship building, I was able to ask several women what their thoughts were

regarding an adult literacy program. This kind of ‘asking,’ in the context of relationships, would be foundational in initiating a program. Once a person has been living in community, and has begun to learn the language and to form some local partnerships, it would then be wise to ask the question Christ asked of blind Bartimaeus, “What is it that you want me to do for you?” in seeking to understand the true needs of the people. One needs to find out whether a literacy program is relevant. The Lingua Links Library produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) says that, “You can help insure that a language program is relevant to the users of the language by finding out what purposes the development of the local language may serve, and how such an enterprise is best carried out.”⁵¹ One needs to ask these questions about the relevance of a literacy program in the church and for the community as a whole. And this would be best done working alongside local partners who understand and support the goals of the literacy program.

Before I began research for this paper, two people, Dr. Sherwood Lingenfelter and Dr. Betty Sue Brewster, suggested that I think about partnering with a Mozambican woman as I seek to minister in Mozambique. When I began researching for this paper, I interviewed a missionary who works with SIL in Africa, George Shultz. When I asked him about implementing a literacy program, he advised me to, “get involved in team teaching with the local people,” which seemed to echo the advice of Dr. Lingenfelter and Dr. Brewster. However, all of this advice did not sink in until one particular morning when I was praying. This particular morning God impressed on my heart that I would work alongside a Mozambican woman, and that I was to pray for her, which I have done since that day. And then that same day, before going to bed at night, God confirmed this calling to a local partnership through a book that I was reading, *Community is my Language Classroom*. This book included a section about a man named Joe Rouse who was a

⁵¹ Lingua Links Library 5.0 Plus CDROM, “Literacy Networking” (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2004-2006).

single missionary in Sierra Leone working amongst the Mende people, and it said about him, “His partner in ministry, Edward Mansaray, [was] a Mende.”⁵² This may seem to be a simple statement, but I knew that God was confirming this issue concerning a local partner in my heart, and God has given me faith that He will provide a local partner/s to work with in Mozambique. However, I believe this local partnership concept is relevant for any ministry and any person or group seeking to serve in a local community.

After partnering with certain like-minded individuals, I would seek to set up a meeting with the local church leaders. There are now nine churches that have been planted by Mozambicans who have grown out of, or worked alongside of, my missionary organization. Amidst these relationships, I would set up some meetings to discuss my motivation in terms of discipleship that produces mature self-feeding Christians, and some of the benefits of a literacy training program. The following are some important things to discuss with the local churches.

Christopher Sugden in, *Radical Discipleship*, says, “The purpose of Scripture is that all people may experience the reality of the grace and power of God. The meaning of Scripture in each situation through which people may experience the reality of God’s life will differ.”⁵³ This means that by one simply knowing the language and culture as much as one can as an “outsider,” one can never know as much as the national person whom one is seeking to disciple. It is imperative not only for people to hear the Bible read and taught to them, but for them to read it for themselves – with their knowledge of their context, their background and experience, their way of life, personal problems, struggles and situations. The Word of God is not only to be known and read in each person’s language, but also in each person’s, and community’s, context. Therefore, in discipling and making disciples who will disciples others, it is key to be able to

⁵² Tom and Betty Sue Brewster, eds. *Community is My Language Classroom*. (Pasadena, Ca: Lingua House, 1986), 180.

⁵³ Christopher Sugden, *Radical Discipleship* (London, UK: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), 144.

read the Word of God with culturally and contextually relevant eyes and understanding. This is something that national church leaders need to understand about the work of cross-cultural missionaries; that the local people will have a deeper understanding of their own people and what the Bible means to them, and therefore it is important for them to read and study the Word of God themselves, and teach others to as well. A literacy program would also be a way of building relationships and reaching out to people in the community.

Laubach said about the each one teach one method, “nothing [he] has ever seen begets friendship so effectively as teaching [non-literates] and sending them out to teach others.”⁵⁴ This is where discipleship is crucial. If the student has witnessed the life and loving service of a Mozambican Christian reading instructor, and desires to know more about Christ and the church, then a door has been opened up to discipleship. In this way literacy instruction can act as a bridge to discipleship. And this discipleship is based on the practical service of teaching people how to read. The love of Christ is shown through practical actions taken by those in the church, not just the foreign missionaries, but the partnering of Mozambicans and foreigners together for Christ. I would also like to share with the church some of the benefits of being able to read as I seek their partnership and support for a literacy program. Some of the benefits would be that the church would be able to...

- Build relationships with people who normally would not visit church.
- Enable people to read the Bible for the first time
- Introduce a person/family to Jesus Christ.
- Grow in their relationships with God.
- Make it more possible for people to acquire certain jobs.
- Help to promote good health through knowledge.

⁵⁴ Frank Laubach, *Thirty Years with the Silent Billion: Adventuring in Literacy* (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1958), 61.

I would hope that the church would see the importance of literacy in a church and community, and that they would not only be supportive, but that they would desire to promote it, and help in implementing it.

In a primarily oral society it would be very important to promote literacy and reading the Bible in the church. As part of my research, I interviewed Wes Collins, a missionary who has worked in literacy training in Ecuador. Collins wisely says about literacy training promotion, “You might think that the availability of the NT in the mother tongue might have people lining up to purchase it, but you need to remember that for generation upon generation, minority groups have filled their days doing things other than reading. So we found that literacy promotion and practice were very important.”⁵⁵ It should not be assumed that people will jump at the chance to read, but that it will take promoting and getting people excited about the prospect of reading. Part of this promoting would be getting the churches to support the goals of the literacy program.

It is important to note that the literacy program would primarily be focused on those in the church, but would certainly be open to those outside of the church. This is because the major goal is not so much in the area of evangelism, but rather Christian discipleship, giving those in the church the ability to read and study the Bible. It would be a literacy program that intentionally involves Bible teaching and discussion, and therefore, those from the community would need to know that it is a Biblically-based program. It is also important to note that this literacy program would not be a requirement for anybody; it would always be an option and a choice to participate in it. Next, I will look some issues involved in the usage of mother tongue languages, orality, and challenges for adults in literacy instruction.

⁵⁵ Wes Collins, Email Interview by author, 25 March, 2007.

Mother Tongue, Orality, and Adult Challenges

The issue of instructing in the mother tongue language versus the trade language is central to implementing a literacy program in Mozambique. The official language is Portuguese, but outside of the urban areas, Portuguese is rarely spoken. There are around eighteen tribal dialects throughout Mozambique, and these mother tongue dialects are the primary languages used by the majority of Mozambicans. In SIL's translation and literacy work they state, "rather than forcing that double burden on the learner, [they] begin with literacy in the mother tongue both for instruction and for the content of the materials."⁵⁶ This should be key to any literacy work when the understanding of the learner comes into question. If people are learning to read in a language which they do not feel completely comfortable with, or which they do not use much, that would not meet the purpose of a literacy program that opens up the doors to discipleship. I would not want a person reading or studying the Bible in a language that he/she does not best understand. It will always be best for people to hear the Bible in their mother tongue. SIL also focuses on mother tongue languages because it is, "particularly important in literacy programs for women in developing countries since they have fewer opportunities to hear and practice the national language than do their male counterparts."⁵⁷ This would certainly be true in Mozambique, and therefore it is vital to speak, teach, and disciple Mozambican women in the language that is closest to their heart; their mother tongue dialect.

William Gardner studied a number of the mother tongue languages in Mozambique, and in two thousand one he writes, "There have been two orthography seminars on Mozambican languages (1987, 1999), and for eighteen languages it is expected that the orthographies that

⁵⁶ SIL International Website (<http://www.sil.org/literacy/mother.htm>)

⁵⁷ Ibid.

have been produced will eventually be declared “official” by the government.”⁵⁸ Many of the languages have been not only put into writing, but Bible translation work and literacy programs are being implemented in many of these languages. This is good news for anyone hoping to implement a literacy program in one of the tribal dialects in Mozambique as there is high possibility that some work has already been started in the mother tongue dialects. Now I will look at some issues in orality.

In a previous section I argued against a solely oral form of discipleship, using Harry Box’s thesis as a counter argument. However, I did state that I consider oral methods to be significant, and conversely Box does concede that literacy is significant. Here I would like to comment on a couple of important points that Box brings up in reference to a literacy program in an oral context. He states,

“for an oral learner to become truly literate involves a lot more than simply acquiring a new skill. It also involves worldview change and changes in cognitive processing. An oral communicator may acquire literacy skills, and learn to read fluently, but when it comes to comprehending the information, there may be many misconceptions and misinterpretations, simply because that person is still an oral communicator.”⁵⁹

This is an excellent point and it is something that all literacy instructors should be aware of when working in oral societies. It is not enough to hear a person reading correctly and writing some words, their comprehension and ability to really ingest, interpret, and utilize what they have read is key. This is especially significant when reading and discussing the Bible as text; is it being truly understood? Is the history, the symbolism, the application to the church today understood in

⁵⁸ William Gardner, “Orthography challenges in Bantu languages.” *Notes on Literacy*, 2001, 27(3):35–42.

⁵⁹ Harry Box, *Communicating Christianity to Oral, Event-Oriented People* (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary 1992), 249-250.

the oral context? True literacy most effectively comes about through a *combination* of oral methods with literacy instruction, rather than an either/or strategy.

Box says that, “an appropriate program is one where people are becoming literate without losing their orality.”⁶⁰ I completely agree. A literacy program is not meant to take away from, or change the oral society which is highly developed and a beautiful part of culture. The literacy program is meant to enrich the oral culture and to open up the door for the Bible to be an effective tool in discipleship. It is also right to note again that a literacy program is only for those who desire to take part in it, no one should be forced to take part. Oral forms of communication and teaching could greatly aid in literary instruction, as well as in discipleship. I will discuss this in my later section regarding thematic discipleship examples in a literacy program. Now I will look at some challenges in adult literacy instruction.

I interviewed the head of literary services in the Pasadena Public Library system, Rosalie Jaquez, to ask about some of the issues and challenges in adult instruction. She said that there are life challenges such as the adults having jobs, needing to work, and simply having very full schedules. She noted that children who are learning to read in school is comparable to a full-time job for children, but with adults, they must plan to read outside of their everyday work schedule. This is tiring and some may not have the time or energy to do this.⁶¹ It is good to have an understanding of these things and to keep them in mind as one relates to the adult learners. Jaquez suggested that it is helpful to give the students things to take home so that they can practice more at home, which also gives them some more flexibility. And she also mentioned the advantage of connecting literacy training to job training or relevant subjects, which would make

⁶⁰ Harry Box, *Communicating Christianity to Oral, Event-Oriented People* (Thesis for Fuller Theological Seminary 1992), 257.

⁶¹ Rosalie Jaquez, Interview by author October 3, 2006.

it practical. I will discuss this kind of practical relevance as I look at some examples of literacy thematic units in the next section.

The People's Workbook created in South Africa contains an interesting section regarding adult literacy. They say that the problem with school teachers is that they, “might try to teach adults as if they are children, but adults who are learning literacy are not children. [The learners] might have more responsibilities and experience than the teacher.”⁶² One will always need to keep this in mind. It will certainly be true for any cross-cultural missionary working in literacy instruction, that the learners will have much more experience of the Mozambican life and understanding of language and culture. That is also why it is important to work alongside of a Mozambican partner because they would have understanding of these things and the cross-cultural workers can learn from them. *The People's Workbook* says that the best way to do an adult literacy program is to have a small group of about eight learners and, “the teacher should encourage all the members of the group to discuss things. The teacher should sit together with the learners, not like in school where the teacher stands in front of the students.”⁶³ Instructors of adult programs need to be humble, encouraging, respectful and sensitive to the adult learners. But there should simply always be respect given to adults and honor given to elders, whether they know how to read, or not.

Discipleship in the Literacy Program

Now I would like to look at specific ways one could incorporate biblical discipleship into the literacy program. Wes Collins, missionary to Ecuador says, “I never called what I did discipleship, but that’s what it was. I worked extremely closely with a number of men helping them to read and writeand to seek God’s guidance in their lives and ministries. In other

⁶² Robert Berold and Collette Caine, eds. *People's Workbook* (Pretoria, South Africa: Sigma Press, 1981), 462.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 462.

words, the “discipleship ministry” was informal, although the work was fairly formal...”⁶⁴ There will always be lifestyle discipleship going on, as the instructors are being watched the whole time, but there is also intentional discipleship through reading and teaching the Word of God, and through putting the Word of God in to practice. I will mainly focus on reading and teaching the Word of God as done through thematic literacy lessons, but I will also look at putting the Word of God into practice through hospitality, in the context of a literacy instruction program.

Teaching Discipleship through General Thematic Lessons

The key to thematic lessons are that they are highly relevant to the Mozambican way of life. Missionary George Shultz made the comment during our interview, “use everyday tasks as reading tools – relate the literacy instruction to something that the student knows.”⁶⁵ Therefore, it is important to find out what subjects might serve as motivations for people to want to learn how to read. What subjects are relevant to everyday life – both practical and spiritual? One could look at culture, history, poetry, etc... I will look at three general themes, agriculture, health, and community, along with Biblical connections from the New Testament. And then I will look at three Biblical themes, women in the Old Testament, wisdom in Proverbs, and praise in Psalms, based on the Old Testament, as examples that one could use to combine discipleship and literacy instruction, based on their relevance to Mozambique.

First, a significant subject in Mozambican life, outside of the cities, is agriculture. It would be powerful to use the images of the earth, seeds, farming, the harvest etc... in Mozambique since this is a major form of economy and subsistence. It is highly relevant and people would most likely be able to identify with these images in powerful ways. The reading lesson could include agricultural vocabulary, and the instructor/s could write down the typical

⁶⁴ Wes Collins, Email Interview by author, 25 March, 2007.

⁶⁵ George Shultz, Interview by author, October 25, 2006.

crops that are locally planted, make a process chart of the stages of sowing, growth, and harvest, and read some new words in a level-appropriate story about farming. There are plenty of activities to draw into this theme and the literacy program could also partner with a group like World Vision, which serves in Mozambique in the area of agriculture, to invite them to share about agricultural issues. This topic would also be especially relevant to women, who typically work the land.

Then one would be able to connect spiritual truths from the Bible about sowing, planting, drought, seeds, the vineyard, the true vine, and more, in order to discuss Biblical principles and gain more understanding. For example, one could share the parable from the gospel of Mark about the sower going out to sow the seed, which is the kingdom of God. Telling this story in an animated way would fit in very well with the African art of storytelling, which would be an example of combining oral methods in the context of literacy instruction. If one could tell the story well and then explain the significance, as Christ did, then one would be able to impart truths from the Word of God, and then discuss the parable as a small group. And just as in this parable, the instructor/s should know that some will hear it and it will take root in good soil, while it may not take root and/or produce in others. But God will bring the harvest in His time!

The instructor/s could also talk about the disciple of Christ as the seed that dies and falls to the ground in order to produce. He/she would read in the gospel of John about the grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies, which remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. This would be an excellent way of bringing up the characteristics of a disciple of Christ, and it can be done in a way that is very interesting and relevant to Mozambicans. The instructor/s would be able to share the truth about the disciple's call to take up his/her cross to follow Christ, and what that means in their context. Miles Stanford states, "When the believer takes up [his/her]

cross for discipleship, the process of death begins to set in. The disciple finds [him/herself] a seed sown by the Son, planted in a home, office, hospital, church, parsonage, or mission station.”⁶⁶ What a beautiful picture for each person to think about in their own life and share about in a small group. Stanford also talks about planting and growing in discipleship when he says, “The principle of growth is always, ‘first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.’”⁶⁷ The group could discuss stages in growth and discipleship. All of these agricultural terms and examples are connected to the literacy lesson and are useful in studying the Bible, which they learning how read.

Second, one could do a thematic unit on health. This topic is of great importance and there are many correlations between women and illiteracy in developing countries; healthcare is of these. For a reading lesson focused on this theme, the instructor/s would include health related vocabulary, show pictures with description words to discuss issues in childcare, nutrition, sickness, and clean water, practice reading sounds and words in health related vocabulary, and read a level appropriate story regarding a subject like nutrition. Currently there is a missionary who is a part of my team in Mozambique who is a nurse. She desires to do healthcare training, and she could bring some of the Mozambican nurses that she has trained to share about some specific issues in the area of childcare. Because this subject is applicable to almost all women, it would most likely be powerful topic to use as a motivation to read.

The instructor/s would then be able to connect this topic with the Bible by looking at sickness, disease, spiritual oppression, and the power of God. I believe these particular topics: sickness, spiritual oppression and the power of God, have been overlooked for far too long in typically western cross-cultural mission efforts. One of the major issues in Mozambique, and

⁶⁶ Miles J. Stanford, *Principles of Spiritual Growth* (Lincoln, NE: 1988), 84.

⁶⁷ Miles J. Stanford, *Principles of Spiritual Growth* (Lincoln, NE: 1988) 83. (Mark 4:28)

possibly throughout Africa, is the fact that spiritual power is a reality, and historically the mission based churches have not addressed it. The answers that have been given have been solely based on science, medicine, doctors, and hospitals. These things are not wrong, but there is also a spiritual reality that is a strong force in Mozambique. One could be a “Christian” and part of the church leadership even, but when he/she gets sick or has some problem, he/she may still go to the local witch-doctor or ‘curandeiro’ for help. This shows that a need is not being met, which God wants to meet in the lives of Mozambicans. This is why it is extremely important to read and study the Bible to see what it says about this subject. God’s Word has much to say, and Mozambicans need to know this.

One story, out of many, that would be pertinent is the story of Jesus’ healing of Legion in the gospel of Mark. The instructor could read this story with the group. This fits in with SIL’s statement that, “The purpose of reading to and with people is to model reading, to show them that reading is communication, just like talking, and to help them see that reading is enjoyable.”⁶⁸ Then the group could discuss the reality of spiritual powers, oppression, the devil, Jesus Christ’s authority over these spiritual powers, Jesus’ deliverance, the transformation of Legion, and Jesus’ charge to Legion to share with his community the great things that God has done for him.⁶⁹ These stories would bring up the issue of God’s power and mercy, and willingness to touch, deliver, and redeem. There are other relevant issues that this story can bring up, and it is necessary to address these subjects and questions by looking at what the Word of God says about them.

In order to incorporate an oral form of teaching and learning, the small group could do a drama depicting this Biblical story. Wes Collins, the missionary who worked in literacy training

⁶⁸ Lingua Links Library 5.0 Plus CDROM, “Literacy Promotion” (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2004-2006).

⁶⁹ Holy Bible NRSV Mark 5:1-20

in Guatemala, says, “We also did a recording of a dramatic reading of the entire NT with readers acting more like actors than simple readers. This was to help people that might never read, and it also has been encouraging for readers to see what it means to really read well.”⁷⁰ A dramatic reading done by those who read well can get others interested about learning to read. It also makes the story come to life in a contextualized way, since drama is a powerful form of oral communication in Mozambique. And as Collins said, these types of readings could be recorded and played back for the readers and for others. What a great way to get people not only excited about reading, but excited about the stories of the Bible and what they mean to their lives!

Third, instructor/s could do a thematic unit based on the subject of community. This subject is extremely important and a highly valued quality in Mozambique, as it would be in most African countries. In his book, *African Friends and Money Matters*, David Maranz states, “Africa has an amazing culture of sharing and solidarity... [that is] mutual economic and social support, hospitableness, putting group interest ahead of individual interest to the extent of showing a definite bias against individuality...”⁷¹ A person who is independent would most likely be considered selfish and arrogant, whereas, a person who functions well in *interdependent* community would be esteemed. The literacy teacher/s could brainstorm with the group to write down what “community” means to Mozambicans and what makes a good community. They could go over the word sounds in the vocabulary they use to describe community, draw a picture of what community looks like, and the instructor could have someone recite a short story that characterizes community life, and then he/she would write it down and read it back to the group.

⁷⁰ Wes Collins, Email Interview by author, 25 March, 2007.

⁷¹ David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 8, 13.

The subject of community is a theme in the Bible that can easily be connected to discipleship teaching. For example, a reader could read about the church in Acts,

“**All** who believed **were together** and had **all** things **in common**; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to **all**, as any had need. Day by day, as **they** spent much time **together** in the temple, **they** broke bread at homes and ate their food with **glad** and **generous** hearts, praising God and having the **goodwill** of all the people.”⁷²

What a beautiful picture of the church as a community in the book of Acts! They could discuss what it means to be Christ’s church. One could ask how the concept of community fits in with the church and the way God desires His people to live? This topic would be very applicable and enjoyable to discuss because it is so highly valued in Mozambican culture. The literacy group could also do an activity after reading and discussion where they pick out some of the words that signify community, which I have written in bold, and the instructor could do a phonetics lesson based on these words. Looking at the theme of community in the Bible would be an encouraging connection from the Bible to Mozambican culture, and they would be acquiring literacy skills at the same time that they are learning truths from the Bible.

As I researched the connection between literacy instruction and discipleship, I met up with missionaries to India who work in the area of Scripture translation, Chris and Ruth Vaz. Ruth brought up the need to broaden literacy programs so that they are community based rather than individualistically based. She brought up the importance of community in discipleship and she suggested a way of fostering community in a literacy program. Ruth suggested some small group meetings where a Mozambican church leader, who is a reader, could read the Bible to the group and then open up a discussion about the subject.⁷³ One of the most effective ways to get people excited about reading is hearing someone read aloud well, and modeling is shown to the

⁷² Holy Bible NRSV Acts 2:44-47

⁷³ Chris and Ruth Vaz, Interview by author, 19 April, 2007.

learners, which leads to success in the future. In this type of small group format everyone would be involved; non-readers who can see good reading modeled by another Mozambican, beginning readers who can aspire to developing their reading skills, and more advanced readers who follow along. No matter what reading level they are on, they can each discuss the Biblical topic all together as a community. These kinds of small literacy groups could also very easily be the starting point for small group Bible studies. Perhaps some women would realize their desire to read and discuss the Bible more, while other would have opportunities to facilitate or take up leadership roles. There are many more general thematic lessons, such as building, sewing, clothes, cooking, games, weather, family, etc...but I would now like to look at three examples of specific thematic lessons based on the Bible.

Teaching Discipleship through Biblical Thematic Lessons

I would like to discuss some Biblical topics based more on the Old Testament in this section, in relation to the literacy program. I will look at the themes of women in the Old Testament, Wisdom in the Proverbs, and Praising through the Psalms.

First, a highly relevant subject in the Bible that one could use when working with women, would be studying some of the women from the Old Testament. Some of the examples would be studying the characteristics of Rebekah as chosen and faithful, Deborah as a wise judge, Ruth as loyal and hardworking, and Esther as beautiful and courageous. These are just some of the women that the literacy program could use for thematic lessons. I will look at one, Ruth, as an example. In her story, Ruth shows the kind of character that God is pleased with, and even though she is a foreigner, a woman, and a widow, she can become a part of God's people. She shows her character in her loyalty to Naomi when she leaves her people and her gods to stay with Naomi in a foreign land. Ruth also shows her character as a hard worker as she goes into the

fields to glean from morning to evening. Ruth is an outsider in so many ways, and yet she is accepted into Israel as Boaz marries her, and she becomes greatly blessed to become part of the Davidic line.

This would be an excellent story for the instructor/s to read and for the small group of women to discuss. They would be able to relate to her womanhood, and many Mozambican women would be able to relate to her life of widowhood. The characteristics that Ruth shows in her life; loyalty to her mother-in-law, respect for her elders, and being a hard worker, are noticed by the people around her and in her community. And even though she is a foreigner, Ruth receives great blessing because of her loyalty, respect, and hard work. In terms of literacy, the women could share what characteristics they see in Ruth, and the instructor could go over these words teaching the phonics, and then they could read them together. They could review sounds they know and see if known sounds are in any of these new words. The learners could also practice writing one of the words that describe the character of Ruth. And with this kind of Biblical narrative, it would make a wonderful ‘play’ as an oral form of communication and understanding. The activity possibilities are numerous and the interest level and relevance would most likely be high with lessons based on women in the Bible.

Second, by looking at the book of Proverbs, I would like to discuss the subject of wisdom in the Old Testament in relation to literacy. Proverbs resonate deeply in the culture of Mozambique because they are an important part of oral history and communication. “For many non literate people, the wisdom of the people is embedded in proverbs...”⁷⁴ It may be true to say that for many people, literate or non literate, including the United States, one wise pithy saying can often make a point better than a lengthy jam-packed sermon. Proverbs especially pack a lot of power and wisdom in the Mozambican culture, and learning about them and discussing them

⁷⁴ Joseph Healy and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 23.

in a group would be very significant. In nineteen ninety-five in Maputo, Mozambique a consultation on, “‘African Proverbs and Christian Mission’ ... emphasized the importance of using proverbs in proclaiming the message of Christianity and stated that African proverbs are a living reality that can promote an authentic African Christianity.”⁷⁵ Using the connection between African proverbs and Biblical proverbs as a part of literacy instruction can show the relationship between orality and literacy.

If we take, for example, one subject of many proverbs, wealth, we can see how it could be the theme of a literacy lesson. The instructor/s could ask the learners what African proverbs they know that deal with money or wealth. As the group shares and discusses them, the instructor could write them down, which would be a way of connecting this oral form of communication to literacy. Then the instructor would read the proverbs back to the learners and the learners could check to see if they are correct. The instructor would be showing the literacy learners that anything a person says can be written down and read back just as it was said. This also shows that their African proverbs are valuable and worthy to be written down. The instructor could then go over some African proverbs that are at phonetically appropriate levels for the learners to read together, and then write down and practice reading.

Then the instructor/s could introduce the fact that the Bible also contains many wise proverbs. He/she could read some Biblical proverbs to the group and they could talk about them. The group could discuss what the wisdom of the Bible says about husbands and wives, human plans and God’s plans, hard work and laziness, love and hatred, the inner and outer person, foolishness and wisdom, humility and pride, lies and truth, adultery and faithfulness, and riches and poverty. As I mentioned previously in the section on discipleship, a major part of discipleship is reading, studying, and discussing the Word of God, which these kinds of activities

⁷⁵ Ibid, 30.

include. The group could also discuss some comparisons between African Proverbs and Biblical proverbs. For example, if we are still looking at the subject of wealth, we could compare the Swahili proverb, “To give is to save”⁷⁶ with the Biblical proverb, “Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing.”⁷⁷ The instructor/s could go over the Biblical proverb phonetically and the learners could read it and write it. This kind of comparison discussion can also serve to encourage historical orality while studying the Word of God, all in the context of literacy instruction.

Lastly, I will discuss an example of basing a literacy lesson on a specific Biblical theme by looking at the subject of praise in the Psalms. The Biblical topic of praise through song can be connected to Mozambican culture because singing is another major form of oral communication. In Roberta King’s book, *A Time to Sing: A Manual for the African Church*, she says one can, “use songs to help people memorize Scripture that will help them to mature in their faith...for teaching Biblical principles and for discipleship.”⁷⁸ We can look at one part of a Psalm, for example, and then look at how we can use it:

“O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and the west, from the north and from the south. Some wandered in the desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress; he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.”⁷⁹

If a literacy instructor reads this psalm, or has one of the more advanced learners read it, then the group could have a discussion about the meanings of this Psalm. As different people share, they

⁷⁶ Ibid, 42.

⁷⁷ Holy Bible NRSV Proverbs 28:27a

⁷⁸ Roberta King, *A Time to Sing*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 158.

⁷⁹ Holy Bible NRSV Psalm 107:1-9

could discuss the themes of thanksgiving, gathering together, community in “inhabited towns,” hunger and thirst, deliverance and redemption, and God’s love for all humankind. Then the instructor can ask what makes a song ‘good’ in Mozambican culture? After discussing this, they could separate into pairs, and using this Psalm and the themes they discussed, the pairs could each create a praise song based on one or two of the themes. So the group could make up their own praise songs based on Biblical Psalms! And this activity could be applied, not only to the Psalms, but to any passage in the Bible. Songs could even be created as a way of chronological Bible-storying.

Roberta King discusses the song making process, which I will paraphrase here: First, go over the Biblical text and give an overview and background to the text. Then summarize what the Scripture is saying and ask people what really touched them from the passage. One could ask ‘who is God?’ based on the passage. They could talk about what they would like to say in a song based on this particular passage. And then once they have taken time to create a song, one can ask if the song is clear and understandable, if the message is faithful to the Biblical text, if the song can be learned easily, and if the rhythm is good.⁸⁰ These are some guidelines for song-making in a small group. We can see that this process involves significant Mozambican oral culture in that it is based on singing, and that it can be used as way of discipling people in that it is based on the Bible, but how does it connect to literacy instruction?

Songs can serve as a culturally relevant form of motivation to read. King states,

“The main advantage of using new songs in literacy programmes is to use them as motivation to learn to read the Scriptures. When working with composers who do not read, yet are singing the Scriptures, they soon want to learn to read for themselves so that they can make songs on their own.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ Roberta King, *A Time to Sing*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 166-167.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 159.

Therefore, those who are interested in music, singing, and praising God, can become enthusiastic about the possibility of putting Scripture to song. One literacy activity could be to make little praise song books. After creating songs, the pairs could work on writing down their songs, and reading them and singing them aloud. By writing down the songs, they can be sung by others, and a group could even get together to perform a song! This would encourage literacy development and authentic Mozambican praise songs.

In conclusion, we can see that the use of thematic units, whether general topics or Biblical topics, all related to the Mozambican way of life, can be very applicable and a great way of motivating and encouraging reading in a cultural relevant way. All of the example lessons that I have discussed are actually more than lessons, they could serve as entire units. The use of thematic units shows the connection between everyday life and the Word of God for the purpose of discipleship. We can also see that one does not need to choose between using oral methods or literacy instruction, but it is a combination of the two that works best in an oral culture such as Mozambique. Both methods can be used to bring about a contextualized approach to literacy instruction and discipleship in an oral culture. In this next section I would like to look at discipleship in a literacy program by putting the Word of God into action.

“Doing” Discipleship through Hospitality

I have discussed discipling through reading and teaching Biblical truths in a literacy program, and I would now like to briefly look at the discipleship principle of “doing” the Word of God in the context of a literacy strategy. In the discipleship section of this paper, I mentioned disciples putting teaching into practice by visiting those who are sick or injured from the church and in the community. This would be a practical way to “do” discipleship, and this concept of ‘visiting’ is crucial in Mozambique. But how could visiting fit in with a literacy program?

In an insightful article called, *The African Art of Hospitality*, by missionary to Africa, Del Chinchén, two proverbs show the importance of ‘visiting’ in Africa: “In the dry Rift Valley of Kenya, the Kipsigis say, ‘Visitors are like rain’ ... [and] in Malawi, people say, ‘A traveler is dew.’”⁸² Visiting is not only a natural part of the culture, but it is a special blessing and honor, and this is certainly true in Mozambique as well. Non-African cross-cultural workers should not only be aware of this fact, but they should seek to take part in it, and even minister through it. Chinchén calls visiting a, “natural discipleship technique” and he says, “it can be a fruitful method of evangelism and discipleship.”⁸³ Therefore, missionaries seeking to make disciples in Mozambique should utilize this culturally relevant way of ‘doing’ discipleship.

Conversely, Chinchén states that, “missionaries could jeopardize their reputation by not being hospitable and by not visiting others. To not visit or extend hospitality could be weighed, in the African ethical scale, as un-Christian and unforgivable.”⁸⁴ So it is not only something that could only help one to minister, but it can also hurt ministry if one disregards this cultural practice. Chinchén notes that, “The Christian community is perplexed with the paradoxical life of the missionary who comes to share Christ’s love but never visits.”⁸⁵ Therefore, we can see that visiting cannot be separated from ministry in an African context, and this culturally relevant practice can be powerfully useful in discipleship. But as I asked before, how does visiting as a discipleship method fit with literacy instruction?

I would propose using the practice of visiting as a part of the literacy instruction program by going out into the community, two by two, to visit peoples’ homes and offer literacy instruction in their homes. The missionary could initiate the visiting pair ministry by going out

⁸² Del Chinchén, “The Art of Hospitality African Style” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October 2000, 473.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 473 -474.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 475.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 477.

with his/her local partner while taking an apprentice along on these literacy visits. Chinchén states, "...if the missionary observes the hospitality etiquette of visiting and being visited in Africa, the door is gently opened, like no others means, for evangelism and discipleship opportunities."⁸⁶ The discipling instructors would use the same method in the homes that they used in the church small groups, and they would be showing the apprentices how to get involved in a practical way in the community as witnesses for Christ. As the disciplined apprentices see the instructors' model, and as they begin to participate in this visiting literacy ministry, they would eventually be able to go out in pairs, as peers, to implement this method. These 'peer pairs' would be Mozambican Christians from the church who had been through the small group literacy program, and who had not only learned to read, but who had been disciplined. They would be using literacy as a means of reaching out to the community, and they would be passing on that "spirit of sharing," which Laubach spoke about, as they seek to minister to others as they had been ministered to. These Mozambican learners would be able to share the benefits of reading since they themselves had just learned.

This 'visiting' literacy instruction would be in the homes of the people, and the instruction pairs would almost be like tutors who visit several times a week in order to sit with a couple, a mother, a father, or a whole family, to provide free literacy instruction. They could work out the best times for the people in the homes so that it would be according to the families' schedules. And the instruction pairs would seek to be encouraging servants that are a practical and clear witness to the love and service of Jesus Christ. Chinchén says, "the more you visit, the deeper the relationship roots grow."⁸⁷ This relationship building in the community is absolutely key to this literacy program. The visiting literacy instruction would be a way of opening up a

⁸⁶ Ibid, 475.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 478.

door to share about Christ, to invite people to church, and to disciple people on the foundation of strong and loving relationships.

Discipleship would actually be taking place from the very beginning because the holy “lifestyle” of the Christian instructors would be a witness to the learners in the homes of the community. Furthermore, the door could be opened up to a Biblical teaching discipleship for learners whose hearts have been touched by God through this loving literacy service and witness. The learners who desire to know this loving God, would actually be able to start reading and studying His Word with the Christian instructors since they are in fact gaining reading skills through this very program.

Discipleship could take many different forms as the instructors would be visiting some couples, singles, several generations of women, or men, or whole families. Tom Sine states some types of discipleship that I would apply to this visiting literacy program: “personal discipling, household discipling, small group discipling...”⁸⁸ Personal discipling would be same-gender person to person sharing and teaching. In household discipling, one works with an entire family and could be best done by a discipling couple who have a family themselves. Another format would be small groups made up of several generations of women, who would be disciplined by women, or several generations of men, who would be disciplined by men (however, several generations of men living together would be very rare). These small groups could meet weekly and would study and discuss the Bible together. All of these discipleship pairs, families, or groups would focus on helping the new readers get into a, “systematic program of devotion and Bible study.”⁸⁹ And all of this discipleship should function in the context of trust, accountability, and community.

⁸⁸ Tom Sine, *Taking Discipleship Seriously* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 72.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 73.

Lastly, literacy instructors using these methods should not only be gracious visitors, but they should also be hospitable themselves, both receiving and giving in the context of Mozambican hospitality. In this way, truly mutual relationships are formed, which are not one-way or one-sided. It is not only the literacy instructor going to visit and give, but the instructor/discipler is also inviting people into his/her home to be visited. Reciprocity is important. Chinchén says that, “The Christian’s love is challenged by the presence of strangers in the home.”⁹⁰ The missionary could have, for instance, times of celebration in his/her home to celebrate people learning to read. These sorts of occasions can serve to strengthen relationships, invite people from the community in to experience Christian fellowship, show relevant and authentic love through hospitality, and to foster opportunities for discipleship. Instructors, who are both visiting and being visited, will be reaching out into the community to open up the doors to introduce people to Christ and to disciple them. This literacy/discipleship strategy based on the African art of hospitality is a way of putting God’s Word into practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, connecting discipleship and literacy in a non-literate environment, such as Mozambique, would be a very effective way to cross-culturally minister both socially and spiritually. The type of literacy program that we have looked at can open up the door for effective discipleship. Daisy Nwachuku says that, “Effective discipleship should have an impact on people, the environment, and in eternity.”⁹¹ We have seen how discipling should have an effect on people as they observe holy living, learn the Word of God, and act on the Word of God, which in turn should effect the environment when disciples put God’s Word into practice in their

⁹⁰Del Chinchén, “The Art of Hospitality African Style” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October 2000, 479.

⁹¹Daisy Nwachuku, *Evangelism Discipleship & Pastoral Care* (Nigeria:Institute for Mission Development 2003), 51.

communities. All of these discipleship principles can be a part of a literacy program, as we have discussed.

We have looked at cross-cultural discipleship in a non-literate environment based on implementing an appropriate literacy program, which would include local partnerships, mother tongue language instruction, and oral methods of learning. This kind of literacy program also functions as a door to discipleship in the church, as we have seen through the general and Biblical use of thematic units, and as a way of reaching out to the community, and as we have seen through the model of visiting and hospitality. Finally, we can see that this strategy for a cross-cultural discipleship ministry, with the emphasis on literacy instruction, would be both applicable and effective in an oral context such as Mozambique, Africa.

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